
More on a User Verification File

by Ron Whyte (#2586)

I wish to add further information to Albert Spenser's suggestion of setting up and maintaining a verification file of perforated material for posterity.

A few years ago while visiting the U.S., I was extremely impressed when I visited the new (at the time) National Postal Museum at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. I strongly recommend that all stamp collectors, whether they are perfin collectors or otherwise, see this museum. Being a perfin collector I naturally made an inquiry about perfins, and the answer was 'Yes! They have a collection, but one would have to make an appointment to see the material' (I think they said two weeks in advance). Here we are looking for a home for material that verifies the users of perfin patterns, and there could be a ready made one in the Smithsonian. I do not know what there is in the collection, but I am sure there are a number of members who can bring us up to speed on what is available. As The Perfins Club Inc. is mainly devoted to the study of US perfins, I believe that a US verification file should be retained at the National Postal Museum.

As to worldwide collections, I would say that each country with a major pattern collection should, and in many cases have begun to maintain their own central control files. In Canada, Jonathan (Jon) C. Johnson provided the country with his collection, donating it to the National Archives in Ottawa, Ontario. It consisted of 6,639 perforated items plus 348 covers from the period between 1900 and 1950. Jon is the co-editor of the 1985 "Canadian Stamps with Perforated Initials", and I know he is keeping additions for an update of the catalogue (one of these days).

Members of the BNA Perfin Study Group are presently in the process of surveying the 357

known Canadian perfin types (about 14,478 issues with about 26,551 potential different positions). A member, Conrad M. Tremblay, has spent a number of years preparing an extensive, 42 page position listing. The list does not include covers, but I am sure will report a lot of new material. Actually, I would say many Canadian patterns do not have any verification covers reported to date, and most likely will never have one for a variety of reasons. It would be interesting to know how many verification covers are housed in Ottawa.

One good example of an undiscovered (and possibly non-existent) cover is the US pattern B-161 (a music pattern that Albert Spenser has chased for years). This pattern also appears on Canadian Revenue stamps, as B10, and there are only 4 or 5 of them reported to date, I would bet my B10 "FCD-2" Van Dam 1912 Custom Duty revenue that there will never be a verification cover to confirm the B10 pattern. I know that Albert would be elated to find one for the B-161 pattern. Now that the computer age is here, we can with ease, scan or photocopy our "one-of-a-kind" perfin items. In lieu of the original cover it would be easy to maintain a photocopy or .tif image file of all known verification items, no matter the country of origin.

The National Archives of Canada internet website is: <http://www.archives.ca>. If you have a verifying cover you might think should be added to the Canadian permanent files, you could ask Cimon Morin (e-mail: reference@archives.ca or fax: (613) 995-6274) if he would like to add it to the collection in Ottawa.

Maybe someone would be good enough to look into the US National Postal Museum to get this important project underway.